

## United States Postal Service

## § 955.12

more definite statement of the complaint or answer, or to reply to an answer.

(b) The Board may, in its discretion, and within the proper scope of the appeal, permit either party to amend his pleading upon conditions just to both parties. When issues within the proper scope of the appeal, but not raised by the pleadings or the documentation described in §955.5, are tried by express or implied consent of the parties, or by permission of the Board, they shall be treated in all respects as if they had been raised therein. In such instances, motions to amend the pleadings to conform to the proof may be entered, but are not required. If evidence is objected to at a hearing on the ground that it is not within the issues raised by the pleadings or the documentation required pursuant to §955.5 (which shall be deemed part of the pleadings for this purpose), it may be admitted within the proper scope of the appeal, provided, however, that the objecting party may be granted a continuance if necessary to enable him to meet such evidence.

### § 955.9 Hearing election.

Upon receipt of respondent's answer or the notice referred to in the last sentence of §955.7(b), appellant shall advise whether he desires a hearing as prescribed in §§955.18 through 955.26, or whether, in the alternative, he elects to submit his case on the record without a hearing, as prescribed in §955.12. In appropriate cases, the appellant shall also elect whether he desires the optional small claims (expedited) procedure or accelerated procedure prescribed in §955.13.

[41 FR 7408, Feb. 18, 1976, as amended at 60 FR 57938, Nov. 24, 1995]

### § 955.10 Prehearing briefs.

Based on an examination of the documentation described in §955.5, the pleadings, and a determination of whether the arguments and authorities addressed to the issues are adequately set forth therein, the Board may, in its discretion, require the parties to submit prehearing briefs in any case in which a hearing has been elected pursuant to §955.9. In the absence of a Board requirement therefor, either

party may, in its discretion and upon appropriate and sufficient notice to the other party, furnish a prehearing brief to the Board. In any case where a prehearing brief is submitted, it shall be furnished so as to be received by the Board at least 15 days prior to the date set for hearing, and a copy shall simultaneously be furnished to the other party as previously arranged.

### § 955.11 Prehearing or presubmission conference.

Whether the case is to be submitted pursuant to §955.12, or heard pursuant to §§955.18 through 955.26, the Board may upon its own initiative or upon the application of either party, call upon the parties to appear before a Board Member for a conference to consider:

(a) The simplification or clarification of the issues;

(b) The possibility of obtaining stipulations, admissions, agreements on documents, understandings on matters already of record, or similar agreements which will avoid unnecessary proof;

(c) The limitation of the number of expert witnesses, or avoidance of similar cumulative evidence, if the case is to be heard;

(d) The possibility of agreement disposing of all or any of the issues in dispute; and

(e) Such other matters as may aid in the disposition of the appeal.

The results of the conference shall be reduced to writing by the Board Member and this writing shall thereafter constitute part of the record.

### § 955.12 Submission without a hearing.

Either party may elect to waive a hearing and to submit his case upon the record before the Board, as settled pursuant to §955.14. Submission of the case without hearing does not relieve the parties from the necessity of proving the facts supporting their allegations or defenses. Affidavits, depositions, admissions, answers to interrogatories, and stipulations may be employed to supplement other documentary evidence in the Board record. The Board may permit such submission to be supplemented by oral argument

(transcribed if requested), and by briefs arranged in accordance with § 955.24.

**§ 955.13 Optional small claims (expedited) and accelerated procedures.**

(a) These procedures are available solely at the election of the appellant.

(b) Elections to Utilize SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) and ACCELERATED Procedure.

(1) In appeals where the amount in dispute is \$50,000 or less, the appellant may elect to have the appeal processed under a small claims (expedited) procedure requiring decision of the appeal, whenever possible, within 120 days after the Board receives written notice of the appellant's election to utilize this procedure. The details of this procedure appear in paragraph (c) of this section. An appellant may elect the ACCELERATED procedure rather than the SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) procedure for any appeal eligible for the SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) procedure.

(2) In appeals where the amount in dispute is \$100,000 or less, the appellant may elect to have the appeal processed under an accelerated procedure requiring the decision of the appeal, whenever possible, within 180 days after the Board receives written notice of the appellant's election to utilize this procedure. The details of this procedure appear in paragraph (d) of this section.

(3) The appellant's election of either the SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) procedure or the ACCELERATED procedure may be made either in his notice of appeal or by other written notice at any time thereafter.

(4) In deciding whether the SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) procedure or the ACCELERATED procedure is applicable to a given appeal the Board shall determine the amount in dispute by adding the amount claimed by the appellant against the respondent to the amount claimed by respondent against the appellant. If either party making a claim against the other party does not otherwise state in writing the amount of its claim, the amount claimed by such party shall be the maximum amount which such party represents in writing to the Board that it can reasonably expect to recover against the other.

(c) The SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) Procedure.

(1) This procedure shall apply only to appeals where the amount in dispute is \$50,000 or less as to which the appellant has elected the small claims (expedited) procedure.

(2) In cases proceeding under the SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) procedure, the following time periods shall apply (i) within ten days from the respondent's first receipt from either the appellant or the Board of a copy of the appellant's notice of election of the SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) procedure, the respondent shall send the Board a copy of the contract, the contracting officer's final decision, and the appellant's claim letter or letters, if any; (ii) within 5 days after the Board has acknowledged receipt of the notice of election, either party desiring an oral hearing shall so inform the Board. If either party requests an oral hearing, the Board shall promptly schedule such a hearing for a mutually convenient time consistent with administrative due process and the 120-day limit for a decision, at a place determined under § 955.18. If a hearing is not requested by either party within the time prescribed by this Rule, the appeal shall be deemed to have been submitted under § 955.12 without a hearing.

(3) In cases proceeding under the SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) procedure, pleadings, discovery, and other prehearing activity will be allowed only as consistent with the requirement to conduct the hearing on the date scheduled or, if no hearing is scheduled, to close the record on a date that will allow decision within the 120-day limit. The Board, in its discretion, may shorten time periods prescribed elsewhere in these Rules as necessary to enable the Board to decide the appeal within 120 days after the Board has received the appellant's notice of election of the SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) procedure. In so doing the Board may reserve whatever time up to 30 days it considers necessary for preparation of the decision.

(4) Written decision by the Board in cases processed under the SMALL CLAIMS (EXPEDITED) procedure will be short and contain only summary